widely belived that one of the main cause of the distress is the neutralisation of tax concessions given to this sector by wide-spread tax evasion at the processing stage. There is thus a near unanimous view in favour of transferring the excise duty from the fabrics to the yarn, which I share. However, in the case of man-made fabrics the entire duty is by way of additional excise duty in lieu of sales tax. Therefore, any change in the duty structure can be made only in consultation with the States I propose to consult the Chief Ministers in this regard".

(c) In the Inter-State Council meeting held in October, 1990, the proposal to shift the additional excise duty on fabrics to the yarn was discussed and it was decided to shift the duty to the yarn stage. However, subsequent to this, some of the State Government have expressed strong reservations in the matter and a suggestion has been made to keep the proposal pending and to discuss the matter afresh in the next Inter-State Council meeting. The issue would thus, require further consultation with the State Governments.

[*Translation*]

Problem of Drinking water in Ramgarh Cantonment Area

277. SHRI BHUBANESHWAR PRASAD MEHTA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is acute problem of drinking water in Ramgarh Cantonment area in Hazaribagh district of Bihar;

(b) whether the Government have received any proposal from the Ramgarh Cantonment Board for solving the drinking water problems and

(c) if so, when the requisite funds are likely to be sanctioned by the Government for the purpose?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c). A scheme of Ramgarh Cantonment Board to provide water in four out of seven wards of the Cantonment at an estimated cost of Rs. 69.66 lakhs was approved and sanctioned as special grants-in-aid in 1985-86. The scheme is under implementation by the Public Health Engineering Department, Government of Bihar.

[*English*]

Maintenance of National Highways

278. SHRI ASHOK ANANDRAO DESHMUKH: Will the Minister of SURFACE TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) the total length of tar and cement roads on National Highways, separately;

(b) the steps being taken for proper maintenance of these roads; and

(c) the expenditure incurred on their maintenance during the last three years, year-wise?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SURFACE TRANSPORT (SHRI JAGDISH TYTLER): (a) Out of the total 33,689 km. length of National Highways, 625 km are missing links or having low grade unsurfaced pavement. The balance length is having basically blacktopped (tarred) surface except for very few short lengths having old concrete pavement which are gradually being converted to blacktopped surface.